Daily Eagle

THE HAUNTED GUITAR.

It rings no more in roundelays,
And blithe ballades of other days:
Its voice is hushed that once could lure
The love of maid and troubadour!
The slender hands that soft did stray
Across its strings are dust today,
And dust the heart that throbbed to hear
The chanson of the cavalier!

Of old, in fair Provence, where song
Is sweet, and life and love are long,
The mystic music in these strings
Once thrilled with heart imaginings.
A woman, from her casement wide,
Soft clad and slender, starry eyed,
Leaned out, with parted lips, to hear
The love song of the cavalier.

A sob! that stifled the sweet song.
A cry! the river sped along,
Fleet flooted, bearing on its way
A mantle, crimson dyed, a gray
And upturned face whose lips would frame
The soft words of a woman's name.
While o'er the waters echoed long
A fragment of that broken song.

This the story, this recalls
The old guitar upon my walls,
And in the dusk I sometimes hear
The fingers of the cavalier
Stirring among the strings and keys
Strange horror haunted harmonies;
And through the gloom there glides along
The ghost of that unfinished song!

—Ernest De Lancey Pierson in The Curio.

A DREAM FANTASY.

There is no doubt that John Gorham often felt bored when I tried to draw him into discussions that he was pleased to term "purely speculative;" in fact, he often gave very plain and blunt expression to his annoyance. He was a physician, and prided himself on being "practical." This quality no doubt has its uses, but it need not necessarily include an utter lack of sympathy with everything that cannot be absolutely demonstrated. However, I have no intention of railing at John's peculiarities, for he was an excellent fellow. We occupied a suite of rooms together in a desirable part of the city, and to the post of the outer door was a sign reading "John Gorham, Physician and Surgeon." Neither of us was married.

One evening I pinned him down to a discussion on the subject of dreams. I had lately been reading some interesting articles on those mysterious activities of the mind which come into play only when the other faculties seem to be shrouded into oblivion. It was a cold November night, but we sat in comfortable easy chairs before a glowing grate fire. I had lain down Bulwer's "Zanoni," and compelled John reluctantly to suspend his perusal of a medical report.

"Dreams," I said, "are often so extremely vivid."

"So is the toothache," was John's rejoinder.

"No doubt," I replied, with no sign of irritation; "but have you never had a dream that seemed for the time being to be a reality?"

"Occasionally; that is a common experience."

"Still further: Have not the occurrences of a dream even been so vivid that you were afterward unable to distinguish their impressions from memories of actual facts?"

"Never," replied John, emphatically.

"On the other hand, have not actual experiences left such dim recollections that you have afterward confounded them with visions of a troubled sleep?"

"Certainly not," said John, with derision as well as decision.

"Well," I replied, "you are so excessively matter of fact in everything that you can't be expected to share the experiences of ordinary mortals."

"And you," retorted John, "are so anxious to discover something new and wonderful that you believe everything you hear and read, and then build up the most outlandish theories."

"I am not theorizing; I am simply trying to make you understand that dreams may be so vivid as to be confounded with actual events, and vice versa."

"And I say that a man who finds himself the victim of such an uncertain condition of mind needs to change his diet and take exercise. But don't bother me any longer. I want to finish this report and then go to bed." And he immediately became absorbed in the pamphlet, his perusal of which I had interrupted.

Thereupon I betook myself to a couch, stretched myself out comfortably, and opened "Zanoni" at the chapter on "The dweller of the threshold." The book, for once, failed to interest me. John Gorham's stubbornness was exceedingly irritating. I longed to convince him that he was wrong. Testimony would not do it, for he would reject any testimony tending to corroborate my claim as the vagary of a disordered brain. The only way was to appeal to his own experience. How was this to be done? Long I pondered over the problem, with eyes half closed.

All at once a plan for convincing John flashed upon me. It was this: Wait until John was asleep; wake him up; get him out of bed; take him into the street; conduct him on some pretext to a distant part of the city; bring him back; give him an opiate in a glass of wine; put him to bed; in the morning deny that either he or I had stirred from our apartments; and finally make him believe that the whole thing was nothing but a dream.

The plan struck me as being well conceived and feasible, and I resolved to put it into immediate execution. Affecting to be sound asleep, I looked cautiously out of the corner of one eye to make sure of observing John when he should retire.

His chair was empty! I looked around, listened, and heard snoring. Could it be possible that John had gone to bed without my knowing it? I arose and found this to be a fact. My reverie had been so profound that his movements had not disturbed me.

So much the better. I observed him carefully and saw that he was sound asleep. Then I opened his drawer of medicines and took therefrom a vial containing a peculiar and powerful drug of whose sedative qualities I had often heard him speak. He had said that it was a dangerous thing to administer except by one thoroughly understanding its properties; but its effects (as he had described them) were precisely those which I wished to produce; and without scruple or hesitation I poured a few drops into a wine glass and set the glass in a particular corner of a tray on the sideboard. I would thus know precisely where to find it on our return from the expedition which I had planned.

John was still sleeping soundly, and everything was ready except the pretext on which to awaken him and lead him forth. This was quickly settled upon. I touched an electric button which communicated with a livery stable, the effect of which would be to bring a horse and buggy to the door within five minutes.

Then I approached the bed and roused John.

"Come, John, you're wanted. An urgent case. Horse at the door. Hurry up."

"Who's sick?" he growled.

"I don't know the name. Jump into your clothes. "I'll go with you and drive."

"All right." And amid much stretching and yawning, John dragged himself from the bed and dressed as speedily as possible. We were soon out of doors and seated in the buggy, with robes drawn closely about our legs, for it was a cold night. I took the reins, but was as yet totally undecided as to what move to make next. I started the horse, however, trusting to luck or some happy thought to determine our further proceedings. Luck settled the matter. We had not driven a dozen rods before a boy came rushing up the street. He halted on meeting us and panting for breath, exclaimed:

"Be you the doctor?"

"Yes," I answered, hastily, discerning an escape from the embarrassing situation into which I had so recklessly rushed.

"How lucky! You're wanted just as quick as possible. Drive to ——"

"Yes, yes," I interrupted. "You know the way, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, jump in with us and drive."

The boy did as requested, and we rattled through the streets at a lively gait. Thus had a most fortunate circumstance come to my aid, in the form of an actual call for a physician, and we were now proceeding to a definite destination. John seemed to think the proceedings a little irregular, but I managed to quiet his uneasiness by various devices of prevarication.

We soon left the lighted portion of the city, and plunged into dark and narrow streets. Nothing could be distinguished in the gloom but the towering shade trees on either side, and an occasional night lamp gleaming dimly from a window.

"Here we are," exclaimed the boy, drawing the horse up so suddenly that we all pitched forward. We alighted, and the urchin conducted us from the street into a narrow alley, on each side of which solid brick walls loomed up. They were barely discernible in the darkness, and I had not the remotest idea of the quarter of the city to which we had come.

Suddenly we turned, in obedience to our small sized guide, and halted before a low arched door set in the brick wall. The boy gave a peculiar knock, which elicited a whistle from within, this in turn being replied to by another and slightly different knock. We were ushered within, and the door was closed behind us.

Inky darkness was all about. A voice commanded us to move forward, and we did so cautiously. The dark passage was not of great length. It led to another door, which, on being opened, led to a dimly lighted apartment. Into this we proceeded, and peered cautiously around, at first being unable clearly to discern the contents of the room. Becoming accustomed by degrees to the semi-darkness, we at length observed that the place was one where poverty, if it did not actually reign, at least had obtained a strong foothold. The furniture was scanty, the walls were dingy and hung with cobwebs, and a sickly flame from a tallow candle sent forth faint and uncertain rays of light.

"There's no money in this job," growled John.

Then came, in a sorrow laden voice, from an obscure corner of the room:

"Oh, my daughter!"

The place had been profoundly quiet up to this point. I was indignant at John's heartless remark. It was not at all like him. I also was somewhat disturbed in mind, for there was something so decidedly real about our night adventure that I began to fear it would be impossible to pass it off as a dream.

"Oh, my daughter!"

The words broke on the silence with startling distinctness. John advanced to the quarter from which they proceeded, and I followed him.

"Bring the light," he said.

The tallow candle was set in an old bottle, and this I seized and carried with me. The light disclosed an aged woman, on whose face were the unmistable lines of struggle and hardship. She was miserably clad. She sat in a rocking chair by the side of a cot. On the cot, covered with an old shawl, lay a girl whose age might have been 10 years. Her face was in startling contrast to its surroundings, for it was fair and excessively white. Her eyes were large, dark and brilliant and her hair was jet black. She took no notice of our presence, but seemed to stare into vacancy.

"Is this your daughter?" asked John.

"Yes, sir; can you save her?" The sharpness of an intense anxiety was in the woman's voice.

John, without replying, placed his hand on the child's brow. He was always very deliberate, and for a moment his touch lingered while he studied the young face.

"She can make so much money for me if she lives," whined the old woman.

This surprising remark caused both John and me to look at her inquiringly.

"She is my seventh daughter, and I am my mother's seventh daughter. She can look into the future and tell all you want to know!"

"Yes," responded John gravely; "I thought there was something peculiar about her."

"Ho, ho! John Gorham," thought I, "do you believe in any such nonsense as that—you, who are so very practical and level headed?" But I kept my thoughts to myself.

"Tell me, can you save her?" repeated the mother.

"I'll try," replied John. "When did you first observe her peculiar gifts?"

"There was no need to observe them. She's the seventh daughter of a seventh daughter, and that's enough. Why don't you give her some medicine to bring down the fever?"

"She has very little fever. Her trouble is a low state of vitality. I will not conceal from you that her condition is serious."

As John spoke he took the child's hand in his own.

"Upon my word," he exclaimed," she has a surprising amount of nervous strength. Her grip is as strong as a man's. I cannot loosen it without hurting her."

At this juncture the child looked at him attentively and intelligently. I was still standing slightly in the rear, holding the candle over John's shoulder.

"Hush!" exclaimed the old woman, in a warning whisper. "She is going to speak."

A faint voice from the bed now spoke these words:

"Beware of the man with the light! Let me think. He does not seem to be your enemy, and yet he is trying to deceive you. But he will not succeed!"

I was thrown into consternation by these words. Of course they meant me. How had this strange child penetrated my designs? I was about to protest that she was delirious, when she relinquished her grasp of John's hand, turned her gaze from him, and relapsed into her former state. As for John, he favored me with a single, swift and searching glance, which threw me into a state of guilty confusion. But if he had any suspicions, he gave no expression to them in words. He opened his medicine chest, selected some remedies, and gave the old woman directions for administering them.

"There will be no need of my calling again," he said. "If the child is no better by to-morrow, take her to the hospital. See that she has perfect quiet, and, above all things, do not let her exert her peculiar powers until she is fully restored to strength. Such things are a great strain on the nervous system, and the girl cannot afford for the present to waste an atom of energy. The medicine I have left will help her, and perhaps successfully bridge over this period of depressed vitality."

The old woman thanked him, and then to my astonishment produced a shining $10 gold piece from some recess of her tattered garments, and tendered it to John. He accepted it gravely, and then we withdrew from the apartment. Once in the open air, the voice of the small boy was heard:

"Jump in," he said, "and I will drive you home."

We obeyed, and were conveyed through the streets at a rapid rate.

"What do you think of the case John?" I asked.

"The child may not live until daylight, or she may grow to womanhood and have a brilliant future."

"What! do you really believe in that nonsense about her gifts as a fortune teller?"

"Don't you?"

I could not answer. I recalled the strange speech which seemed to indicate that the girl had penetrated my designs on John, and was abashed. The ride was continued in silence, and in twenty minutes we had reached our destination. The boy volunteered to take care of the horse, and in another moment John and I were in our own apartments.

John immediately proceeded to undress. In five minutes he was ready for bed. Without delay I prepared for the further execution of my plot.

"John," said I, "there's a pint of champagne left in my closet. It strikes me that it would be just the thing with which to top off this night's adventure. What do you say?"

"A most excellent idea," was John's reply.

How smoothly everything was working! I opened the closet, drew forth the bottle and wrenched off the wire with which the cork was bound. I then glanced furtively at John. He was winding his watch, with his back turned toward me.

I quickly filled the glass which contained the drug and extended it to John. He quaffed the contents with great relish, I meanwhile watching him over the rim of my own glass. He smacked his lips critically after his glass had been drained.

"It seems to me that there is a singular flavor to that champagne."

I felt a guilty thrill and affected not to hear him.

"How sleepy I am," was his next remark. "It must be the effect of riding in the cold."

Then he tumbled into bed, and the next minute had sunk into a deep sleep. The drug had taken effect with surprising, not to say startling, promptness, and I listened to his heavy breathing with satisfaction.

I now began to give serious thought to the situation, and to deliberate on the necessity of removing every trace by which the reality of our night's adventure could be proven. I knew that John could by no possibility find the place we had visited, for the route was a long and circuitous one and had been traveled in darkness. Ah! There was the $10 gold piece which the woman had paid him. Without hesitation I removed it from his pocket and placed it in my own. Was the trail covered? I thought so. In the morning I would declare that we had not stirred from the house during the night, and after persuading John that the whole thing was but a dream—making him commit himself fully to that view of the case—tell him the truth and thus confront him with a demonstration of my theory!

I smiled with satisfaction. But hold! There was the boy! Suppose he should turn up. I must find him and purchase his silence. I was so intent now on the success of the plot that I would have expended a hundred dollars rather than see it fail. I decided to go to the livery stable in search of the urchin who had driven us to the abode of the sick child.

First, I approached the bedside to make sure that John's slumber was so sound that he would be sure to take no notice of my departure and return. He lay perfectly quiet, but there was something singular in his appearance.

I gazed at him more closely, and was horrified at a change that had come over him. He no longer breathed deeply, but in a quick, convulsive and exhausted manner. His lower jaw hung down, his eyes were half open, and he looked like one vainly struggling for a hold upon life.

I was paralyzed with dismay, and stared at him in an agony of fascination. More faint, rapid and spasmodic grew his breathing; more distressing the heavings of his chest; more ghastly the pallor of his countenance.

Spellbound, as if in a nightmare, I still gazed upon him. The ebbing of vitality proceeded with frightful rapidity; there was at length a mere flutter of breath; and then came that awful repose, that unspeakable silence, that dreadful calmness of the untenanted clay!

Then the full horror of the situation burst upon me. The drug had done its work too well; John Gorham was dead! I was his murderer!

"John!" I shrieked.

And then, with rapidly scattering senses, I staggered and fell heavily to the floor.

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"Ha! Ha! Ha!"

What mocking laugh was that ringing through the air? Consciousness was returning, and with it the sound of harsh, discordant merriment.

Again came a peal of laghter. Was it my own voice, and was I a lunatic?

I opened my eyes and looked about. I was still lying on the floor, but not by John's bedside. John seemed to be sitting in a chair with a book in his hand. I stared at him in a state of bewilderment.

Again the laugh. It was his voice. Then he spoke:

"Do you want me to come and help you up?"

"Where am I, and what has happened?" I asked.

"You appear to be sprawled on the floor, and it is quite evident that you fell asleep and rolled off the couch," he answered.

At these words I hastily rose and pulled my wits together. The truth was soon apparent. Following our discussion of dreams, I had read "Zanoni" until sleep had stolen upon me, and both the conception and carrying out of the plot to convince John were but the visions of a dream. I was somewhat mortified, but at the same time immensely relieved, for John was alive and well, and still held in his hand the medical report which he had been perusing when our discussion began.

We soon retired for the night, but neither at that time nor on any subsequent occasion did I relate my dream to John, for in it is the keynote of an experiment I mean to try some day for his benefit. It is the only way in which he can ever be convinced that the phenomena of dreams involve possibilities beyond those dry, matter of fact realities that now form the boundaries of his experience and mental vision.—O. S. Adams in The Epoch

An Incident in Cold Harbor.

I want to invoke your muse again—not to do anything, for thoughts such as yours and the thrill and ring of such poetry cannot be evoked. But I give you a fact and a suggestion. At the battle of Cold Harbor, June 23, 1862, Gen. Jackson ordered me to take the First Maryland in, and without any definite orders where to go.

I asked him which way I should move when I had broken their line. He said, "That way," swinging his right arm at full length from him. The direction I afterward found was behind McClernand's left.

Anyhow, I pushed forward toward the place where there was the hottest of the firing and pressed right into the smoke. I found a Federal six gun battery about 1,000 yards in front and a Federal line of battle in front of the battery in a roadway cut into the ground, which afforded them perfect protection. The fire every instant was heavy, more trying. On my right the troops came tearing back in the smoke and gloaming (it was just about sundown); on my left the line lay on the ground and began firing. My own line began to tremble, the men to stumble and catch their toes in the ground, and in a moment they would have broken—shot and shell screaming over them, and musket balls knocking a man out every minute. I sprang out in front of the line, gave the order, "Halt! Attention! On the center dress," and then put them through the manual of arms. It was such a relief that they cheered, and at the order rushed forward at a "right shoulder shift arms," and went over the Federal line and battery without firing a shot.—Gen. Bradley T. Johnson's Letter to Col. James R. Randall.

A High Sounding Legacy.

A double surprise was experienced by the Society of Physicians, of Vienna, Austria. The first was when the chairman, Dr. Von Bamberger, made known that Dr. Costa-Alvarenga had left to the society a legacy of 3,500,000 Portuguese reis. The imagination of the members upon the great things they could perform with so enormous a sum began to run riot, when the chairman interrupted them and proceeded to inflict the second surprise. He said the value of Portuguese reis was so very small that the legacy would realize some $4,500 to the funds of the society—a powerful cooler to overheated imaginations.—Chicago News.